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U.S. Is Silent On Reports Major Cuba Move Is Due

Washington, Oct. 21 (AP)—The Kennedy Administration pulled a cold, irritating but not unusual tight cover of secrecy today over reports and speculation through official Washington that the United States was about to make a major, perhaps sensational, move in the Cuban crisis.

The only hard fact available was that air, naval and marine forces have been concentrated during recent days in the Florida-Caribbean area. The official explanation for the build-up was that the United States is holding its annual naval maneuvers at Puerto Rico.

Building Control Tower

(In later developments) Sunday, construction men appeared suddenly at the Key West, Fla., airport under orders to work through the night to build a control tower. Informed sources indicated the tower is needed to handle a big increase in traffic.

(At Norfolk, Va., a squadron of six amphibious vessels was added to a Navy training exercise in the Caribbean and sailed from

Little Creek amphibious base immediately.)

President Kennedy's sudden decision to cut short his Western political swing yesterday and fly back to Washington was one cause of the sense of excitement which seized the Capital overnight.

But if Mr. Kennedy felt the excitement he did not show it. He did seem to be making a quick recovery from the cold which officially caused him to return home yesterday.

The President and Mrs. Kennedy attended mass at St. Stephens Catholic Church. He looked fit and smiled cheerfully to a crowd of about 75 persons who applauded as he left the church.

The White House press secretary, Pierre Salinger, said the Chief Executive planned to relax today. Dr. George Burkley had found his temperature and pulse normal and his nasal congestion cleared up, Salinger said, but the doctor recommended rest.

Speculation On Cold

Any major development involving United States activity in the Cuba situation—or anywhere else in the world—would require Mr. Kennedy's close personal attention and command his constant interest.

Hence there was some speculation as to whether the President's cold—irritating but not unusual—had been treated as a "diplomatic illness" to cover some official need to return here from Chicago more than 24 hours ahead of schedule.

Nowhere in town the Secretary of State, Dean Rusk, was at his desk in the State Department today. Salinger, who does not normally show up at the White House on Monday, was there for a couple of hours before returning to his home.

State Unusually Well Staffed

Pentagon command and policy posts were unusually well staffed. There was no official comment from any quarter, however, on any of the speculative reports.

The Florida Times-Union, published at Jacksonville, Fla., had a telephone interview with Arthur Sylvester, Assistant Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs, and jeune, N.C. quoted him as saying:

"If you are worrying about us using the amphibious exercise in the Caribbean to attack Cuba, alone if necessary—if Cuban com-mon't. We wouldn't be exercising munism threatened such vital in-terests as the Panama Canal, hit somebody. If people think Guantnamo naval base, the se- this exercise is a cover for some- curity of other Latin American nations, or the security of the United States.

Those on the job in the Defense Department included Gen. Maxwell D. Taylor, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff; the Secretary of the Navy, Fred Korth, and Adm. George W. Anderson, Jr., Chief of Naval Operations.

In the Caribbean area itself extensive naval maneuvers were under way, involving about 40 ships, 20,000 men and carrier-based aircraft.

The center of the maneuver area is the small island of Vieques, Puerto Rico, Pentagon officials have said. Vieques lies just east of Puerto Rico, which is east of Cuba and separated from Cuba by the island shared by Haiti and the Dominican Republic.

The naval exercises began October 15 and will run until October 30. But not all the rumor and speculation was necessarily associated with that operation.

A number of naval vessels pulled out of Norfolk. The Defense Department said they went to sea to ride out Hurricane Ella in open water rather than in port.

The hurricane turned away from the coast.

The Defense Department recently shifted a squadron of 1,400-mile-an-hour Navy jet fighters to Key West, which is 90 miles from Cuba. The word was that they were part of normal moves to offset the build-up of Communist military power in Cuba.

As to the nature of this build-

up the Defense Department insisted that it still is essentially defensive and not therefore an offensive threat to the United States. Officials had denied reports that Soviet attack bombers were beginning to show up in Premier Fidel Castro's Soviet-made arsenal.

Reports that a marine unit was being moved from California to the East Coast were finally confirmed here but with the explanation that the operation was part of the Caribbean maneuvers. The group was described as a rifle battalion of about 1,200 men. It was being transferred from Camp Pendleton, Cal., to Camp Lejeune, N.C.

Mr. Kennedy told a news conference several weeks ago that the United States would act—alone if necessary—if Cuban com-mon't. We wouldn't be exercising munism threatened such vital in-terests as the Panama Canal, hit somebody. If people think Guantnamo naval base, the se- this exercise is a cover for some- curity of other Latin American nations, or the security of the United States.

If Castro has stepped across any of the lines Mr. Kennedy drew at that time the Administration here has not said so. Officials denied that any offensive arms had arrived in Cuba and there was no public word of a Cuban-based Communist operation against any neighboring country.

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